

## Chapter 21: Missing Shanty

“Evan, tomorrow, we can strike another deal,” Mr. Romanov suggested. “It’s good that you decided to visit. At least you can see how serious I am being a client in the many years to come.”

Mr. Romanov had taken Evan for a tour, driving from one showroom to another. “I expect over a hundred shipments to happen next year, so we can agree on a fair price where we both will be happy.”

Evan laughed. He replied, “Yes, that we should do.”

They were talking while walking around Mr. Romanov’s enormous car showroom when a woman with dark brown hair approached them. She was tall, slender, and had an elegant face, with chocolate brown eyes.

“Ah, Alina,” Mr. Romanov called, “Come meet Mr. Thompson.” “Mr. Thompson, since you have already divorced, it would be good to meet other women then,” Mr. Romanov said. “Alina is one of our primary models for the -”

“I’m not interested in seeing anyone, Mr. Romanov,” Evan quickly interrupted. “Oh, come on.” Mr. Romanov pointed at the girl, saying, “Isn’t she gorgeous?”

Evan glanced at the girl and saw her smiling his way. He studied her clothes and disapproved of how revealing it was. He returned his attention to Mr. Romanov, saying, “I prefer a conservative one.”

It had been a few days since Evan was in Russia. The trip was primarily for business, but he also used the time to think things through, especially about Shantelle.

Now and then, Mr. Romanov would introduce him to a woman, whether an employee or an acquaintance, but he found himself comparing them to Shantelle.

“I don’t find her attractive at all.” “I prefer on who can cook. My ex-wife used to prepare my meals.” “I see, you are interested in fashion?”

My ex-wife is interested in biology.” No matter how attractive or achieved the women seemed, Evan could not bring himself to like any of them. It was as if they could not compare to his ex- wife!

On another occasion, Mr. Romanov invited Evan to dinner with his family. He met his son, who, after dinner, required help with his homework.

Evan and Mr. Romanov were drinking coffee when the boy walked in. “Dad, Mom, doesn’t know this, and I was sick. last week, so I missed the lesson. It’s biology!” “What about your nanny?”

Mr. Romanov said. “I have a guest, son.”

“She doesn’t know this,” Valentin complained. Mr. Romanov tried to help his son, but having missed school for a long time, all he could say was, “Try... the internet.

Evan laughed from across the table. He offered, “Let me try. What’s your homework about?” “Biological molecules,” said the young man. “Ah, proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, and nucleic acids,” Evan suggested. “ Let me see how I can help.”

Minutes went by, and Evan shared his knowledge about biological molecules. “Proteins repair and build your body’s tissues, allow metabolic reactions, and coordinate bodily functions. Which is why getting protein into your diet is very important.”

As Valentin took notes, Mr. Romanov nodded approvingly. After the boy was done, he smiled and thanked Evan. Then, he left to put his homework altogether. "Thank I you, Evan. I did not know you were very keen on biology," Mr. Romanov remarked.

"It was my wife – I mean, my ex-wife." Evan paused. Then, he added, "She always incorporated biology into our daily life. She was stern with my diet and reminded me of how each body molecule works. Every day was a new lesson learned with her." "She – um. She would have pursued medicine if we did not marry early," Evan added.

Evan remembered when Shantelle would talk about photosynthesis as she directed where the plants around the garden should go. Back then, he felt it was unnecessary, but their villa wound up having a good amount of floral blooms that neighbors were always jealous.

"She must be quite a woman," Mr. Romanov revealed. "No wonder you are still so hung up on your ex-wife. Too bad you are already divorced."

Evan leaned back. He said inwardly, ' Me? Hung-up on Shanty?' He had to admit that part of him wanted to see her, and he definitely did not like how she cut all communications with him. 'I guess... I miss her?'

'I miss her,' he repeated in his head. He recognized he had never been this way with any other woman, even with Nicole, whom he thought he liked in the past. He felt sorry for Nicole, but other than that, he never missed her or longed for her. Evan rarely dated in his college years. When he went out with a girl, it was only for a simple dinner. He never asked for a second date.

Following this realization, Evan was more determined to see Shantelle upon his return. He wanted to understand what he was going through.

After ending his dinner with Mr. Romanov, Evan called his assistant back in Rose Hills. When James answered, he directed, "James, send a bouquet of roses to Shanty at the Scotts' address." He gulped before adding, " Ask the florist to add an 'I'm Sorry' card."

Silence stretched for seconds before James answered, "Oh, Sir. That's good to hear. I thought Miss Shanty was lovely. I'll do that first thing in the morning."

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The next day, Evan had an entire day of meeting with Mister Romanov and his executives, but when he was done, he immediately called his assistant.

On the other line, James said, "Sir, the flower shop said there was no Shantelle Scott at the address I gave him. I'll deliver – "

"It's fine. You don't have to. You have a lot on your plate with me being gone. They probably went to the wrong house. Ask them to send it again. I'll be preparing for my flight tomorrow." Evan said.

"Call the Sarah Kate boutique and have the gown I ordered for Shanty delivered."

"Yes, Sir," James confirmed. "Announce to the company that I'll take a week's leave upon my return. Book me and Shanty a package to Paris. I want the best hotel, first-class tickets, and excursions to the Louvre Museum and the Eiffel Tower," Evan added.

"Yes, Sir. That's well noted," James replied with enthusiasm, for he wholeheartedly supported his boss' change of heart. Another day came, but Evan received bad news.

“The flower shop insisted that there was no Shantelle Scott at the house, Sir. Maybe I should deliver this myself,” James reported.

“What?” Evan was on his way to the airport when James called. “It’s fine. Ask for a new bouquet by tomorrow. I’ll personally go to the Scotts and give Shantelle the flowers. Have it sent to the villa. It’s about time that I speak to Shantelle,” Evan instructed. “And the gown?”

“Sarah Kate will deliver the gown today, Sir,” James confirmed. “And the tickets to Paris have already been booked, including your 5-star accommodation in the city.”

“Good,” Evan answered. “Send me the booking details, and I’ll print them when I get home.” Evan knew he was thinking ahead.

There was always that possibility that Shantelle would reject the trip to Paris, but he did not care. He had to try. Buying the tickets and reserving the rooms was his way of showing Shantelle his sincerity to spend time with her.

Soon, Evan boarded the aircraft. He settled in his seat in the first-class cabin and took a nap. Just before shutting his eyes, he thought only of Shantelle. He wanted to dream of her.

**\*\*FLASHBACK \*\***

“Evan, let me help you,” Shantelle said as she walked before him. Evan was shaving his face in front of their bathroom mirror when Shantelle insisted she give it a try.

“I am not a child, Shanty,” Evan complained, but Shantelle only giggled and took the shave. Evan and Shantelle were already married for six months. They were harmonious with each other, though; they had not yet been intimate. After their wedding, they left for their honeymoon in the Caribbean but never made love.

To Evan, the first six months of their marriage felt like getting to know each other all over again. Having been gone for so long, he barely knew what went on with Shantelle’s life.

“Evan, this is not about being an adult. This is me, your wife, being affectionate,” Shantelle said. Her face flushed from her admittance.

While Shantelle shaved the beard on his face, she smiled. Her eyes gleamed at her actions. Meanwhile, Evan could not help but study her closely.

Evan silently admitted how Shantelle was magnificent. She had that innocent look on her face when she smiled. It was for the first time that Evan forgot everything. He forgot his anger toward his father and overlooked that Shantelle had worked with his father to marry him.

“There, done,” Shantelle said. Her blue-colored eyes were glued to his. They both stilled, just doing nothing but looking at each other for seconds.

Evan did not show it, but secretly, he admired her beauty and spirit. Evan held Shantelle’s waist, and for the first time since their marriage, he leaned and kiss her lips. Heat spread through his body. For the first time, they made love that night.

Evan had never reacted to any woman that same way. Despite that fact, he hid his every emotion. At that time, Evan would never admit to being affected by Shantelle, not when he was pushed into their marriage.

**\* END OF FLASHBACK\*\*\***

“Ladies and gentlemen, Blue Airways welcomes you to Rose Hills. The local time is nine in the evening.” Evan awoke to the announcement. He groaned as he relaxed back in his seat. He was dismayed as he said, “It was a dream. It was... only a dream.”

He wished it wasn't a dream, and that Shantelle was right before him.

‘Shanty,’ he said. ‘I miss you.’ It was late in the evening when Evan arrived, but tomorrow, he would unquestionably drop everything to see Shantelle.